

Flowers

This week's recipes

Find out how to use violas to make a cream for eczema; how a gel for acne can be made with marigold flowers; how to make elderflower lozenges, and how to make a fragrant bath bomb from lavender.

These recipes are taken from the book 'Grow Your Own Drugs', published by HarperCollins.

Viola cream for eczema

Makes one 150 ml pot

2 tbsp (20 g) viola flowers, stripped from their stems 1 tbsp (20 g) Roman or German chamomile, dried
1 tsp beeswax 1 tsp almond oil 1 tsp vitamin C powder 1 tsp glycerine 1 tsp emulsifying wax

1. Place the violas and chamomile flowers in a glass bowl. Pour over the water to cover. Leave to infuse for 10 minutes. Put the infusion into a medium-sized pan (this will form the bottom of your double boiler or bain-marie).
2. In another glass bowl, add the beeswax, almond oil, vitamin C powder, glycerine and emulsifying wax. Place on top of the infusion pan, and warm over a gentle heat, stirring until melted. This takes about 10 minutes.
3. Strain the infusion, then slowly whisk it into the oil mixture until incorporated - the texture should be smooth, like mayonnaise.
4. Pour the mixture into a sterilized dark glass ointment pot, then seal.

USE: Apply to affected areas morning and night. Ideally, apply within a few minutes of bathing, to keep moisture in the skin.

STORAGE: Keeps for up to 6 months in the refrigerator.

Marigold gel for acne

10 rose geranium flowers, with leaves and stems 1 marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) flowers 1 lavender flowerheads 1 ml water 1 sachet vegetable gelatine 1 tsp vodka 1 drop tea tree oil

1. Roughly chop the flowers, leaves and stems of the rose geranium and place with the marigold flowers and lavender flowerheads in a large glass bowl.
2. Bring the water to the boil and pour it over the flowers to make an infusion. Leave to infuse for 10 minutes, or until the water has taken on the colour of the flowers. Place the infusion, including the plant material, into a blender and whiz. Strain the mixture through a piece of muslin into a clean bowl.
3. Now, in another bowl, dissolve the gelatine in 2 tbsp cold water. Gradually add the flower infusion, stirring to separate lumps. Add the vodka and tea tree oil, stirring until a gel is formed. Using a funnel, pour into a pot with a pump dispenser.

USE: Apply to affected areas 2 times a day, or as frequently as needed.

STORAGE: Keeps in the refrigerator for up to 6 weeks.

Elderflower throat lozenges

10-15 fresh elderflower heads eucalyptus leaves tbsp linseed tsp dried elderberries cup Gum Arabic cups icing Sugar cups hot water

1. Firstly, put about 10-15 elderflower heads into 3 cups of freshly boiled water to create a basic infusion. Add 2 tbsp of linseed and 12 eucalyptus leaves and leave for about an hour. It's ready when the pure watery liquid starts to have a similar consistency to egg white.
2. Whilst it's infusing, use a pestle and mortar to break up a cup of Gum Arabic into the smallest pieces you can - this is so it dissolves as easily as possible. Into that add 3 tsp of dried elderberries and crush.
3. Next, add the Gum Arabic mixture into a cup of hot water. Stir using a spoon until the granules of gum have turned into a thick, treacly jam-like consistency.
4. Strain the infusion, and add a cup and a half of it to the Gum Arabic mixture. Next, add 2 cups of icing sugar and mix; the sugar acts as a preservative and gives it body.
5. Place it on a low heat and stir continuously for about half an hour until it gets to a really thick, syrup-like consistency and starts to come away from the sides of the pan. You can also test by pouring it with the spoon and touching it; if it doesn't stick to your finger it's ready, but do be careful as it could be hot.
6. Finally pour onto a baking tray lined with greaseproof paper and leave to set. When it's hard it's just a case of bashing it until you get the right size pieces!

STORAGE: Coat the lozenges with icing sugar to stop them sticking together, and to take out some of the moisture.

VARIATION: If you want to make a cough syrup instead of lozenges, just add half the amount of sugar.

Lavender bath bomb

5-6 fresh lavender sprigs tbsp citric acid powder tbsp bicarbonate of soda drops lavender essential oil tsp plant-based oil (vegetable or almond oil)

1. Heat the oven to 180C. Once it has reached that temperature, turn it off and place the lavender, hanging upside down, in the oven to dry for about 2 hours. When dry, remove the flowers from the stalks and set aside.
2. For the next stage you need to make sure that the bowl you are using, and your hands, are completely dry - otherwise the bomb will start fizzing. In a glass bowl, mix the citric acid and bicarbonate of soda together. Add a few drops of lavender oil and 1 tsp dried lavender flowers, along with the vegetable or almond oil. Mix everything together with a metal spoon.
3. Place the biscuit cutter on top of a sheet of baking paper. Put the mixture into the biscuit cutter and press down with the back of the spoon. The oil now needs to evaporate so the bomb can set as a dry, hard block - leave for a minimum of 30 minutes and preferably overnight.

STORAGE: Store in tin foil to keep out moisture.

VARIATION: If you are making this with kids you can add 1/2 tsp of edible glitter into the mix to create an even more dramatic effect.